



## **McGregor W. Scott**

United States Attorney  
Eastern District of California

*Sacramento*  
501 I. Street, Ste 10-100  
Sacramento CA 95814  
Tel (916) 554-2700  
TTY (916) 554-2855

## **NEWS RELEASE**

*Fresno*  
2500 Tulare St., Suite 4401  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Tel (559) 497-4000  
TTY (559) 497-4500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: *David Gappa, 559-497-4020*

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<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae>

### **MODESTO AREA RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

FRESNO - United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that RICHARD VANDENAKKER, 38, of Salida, California pleaded guilty before the Honorable Lawrence J. O'Neill to one count of possessing visual depictions of the sexual exploitation of minors.

The case is the result of an investigation by the Fresno office of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement working in cooperation with the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department as part of Project Safe Childhood. Project Safe Childhood was launched to increase federal prosecutions of sexual predators of children, and to reduce the number of Internet crimes against children including child pornography trafficking. As a part of PSC, the United States Attorney's Office has teamed with state and local agencies and organizations to increase law enforcement presence on the Internet, and to educate the public about safe Internet use, thereby reducing the risk that children might fall prey to online sexual predators. For additional information on the PSC initiative, please go to [www.projectsafefchildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafefchildhood.gov) or call the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California and ask to speak with the PSC coordinator.

According to Assistant United States Attorney David Gappa, who is prosecuting the case, VANDENAKKER admitted in a plea agreement that on July 11, 2007, he possessed more than 600 images of the sexual exploitation of minors, some of which were prepubescent children. He also admitted that he had obtained the images through use of the Internet and that several of the images depicted violence or sadistic or masochistic conduct. According to court documents, ICE agents and Stanislaus County Sheriff's deputies executed a search warrant at VANDENAKKER's Salida home on July 11, 2007, and seized two computer hard drives, a laptop computer, and a memory card. The leads in the case resulted from an ICE-led international child pornography investigation. VANDENAKKER had been employed for nineteen years as a custodian at Sisk Elementary School in Salida, California, but agents reported that none of the sexually explicit images recovered in the investigation were of local victims.

VANDENAKKER was remanded into federal custody after his change of plea, and he will be sentenced on December 7, 2007, at 8:45 a.m. He faces a maximum prison term of ten years, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a possible lifetime term of supervised release. The

defendant's actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

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